

1988

Poems

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Poems

Abstract

Caesarian, The newsboy's whistle is a time-teller, Positive

Caesarian

You were not hauled
bawling into life,
butting headfirst to your birth.

You were lifted,
like a gift,
from the wrapping of your mother's flesh.

The newsboy's whistle is a time-teller

Woman turns over,
dark sheets of night turn over,
draw back like a lid and reveal
toucans and palms
and over his lush, leafy shoulder
the lowered blind
lightening.

Dust motes blink in the sun.
The wall is pink and rose
turning past six
the colour of sand,
the colour of lions.

Trains clatter into consciousness.
Roads fill with reminders –
it's time to get up.
Over the paving stones
the newsboy's hand-cart
rattles;

herald of the new day
coming into focus
distinct as newsprint,
he whistles
awakening the sleepers,
street by street.

Down the dim corridor
patter
of sleep-troubled feet,
child emerges blinking.
Woman turns over.
Day's abeyance ends.

Water gushing
steam billowing
radio blaring
razor shaving
tinker, tailor, soldier, sailor,
juice, muesli, toast, tea.

The last dish laid on the rack,
house empty of all but the woman
and the testimony of others:
rumpled towels, damp toothbrush bristles, twisted sheets.

Ash in the grate, black cinders,
wood to be chopped,
clothes to be pegged up.
Cleansing and replenishment,
all the rituals to be enacted
before the newsboy returns
winding up the day,
four o'clock dusk at his heels,
his cart's wheels turning into night.

Knives and forks rising and falling,
fires dancing and dying,
beds sighing.

Rosy lions in the sand.
Toucans in the breeze-rustled palms.
Turning over and over,
shoulder to shoulder.

Positive

Hearing the result,
I knew how it felt
to be a ruddy-cheeked Russian doll
with wide wooden hips,
harbouring inside
miniatures, brightly painted,
complete with babushkas
neatly tied.

Or an ivory seed from India
containing,
smaller than a child's fingernail,
a complex, carved elephant,
perfect in every detail.